

# Future of Guild hangs on Wash. Post election

By I. William Hill

The Newspaper Guild held its 43rd annual convention in Washington, D.C. (June 28-July 2) with these highlights:

- Approval of a new plan aimed at keeping *Washington Post* Guildsmen in the Guild and healing wounds left by Washington-Baltimore Local 35's executive board's attempt to discipline Post Guildsmen for continuing to work during the long pressmen's strike at The Post.

- Decision to advance the Guild's wage goals to \$650 per week for the top minimum of key classifications, with a starting minimum of at least two-thirds of that amount (\$433), and to \$325 per week for the top minimum of all other classifications.

- Decision to press for a voluntary international pension program to benefit the 3000 Guild-covered employees who face retirement without pension. The program would be administered by the Guild with an equal number of Guild and employer representatives as trustees.

- Decision to push for employer-financed child-care centers to serve both pre-school and after-school children of employees.

## Main issue

The action involving The Washington Post was the most dramatic of the convention. With the National Labor Relations Board setting July 17, 20 and 21 as dates for an election requested by Post Guildsmen to determine if the Guild or an independent Washington Newspaper Union should be their bargaining agent, President Charles A. Perlik, Jr. went before the convention on the first day to say this:

"What confronts us is the danger of one of the severest setbacks to threaten this union in decades, if not its entire history. We are faced with the very real possibility of losing the fourth largest unit in the Guild, a unit larger than 78 of the Guild's 83 locals, a unit whose key top minimums for years have led all the rest and are today the only ones effectively over \$500, a unit whose loss would have a devastating effect on both our bargaining and our organizing for years to come."

In the same speech, Perlik emphasized that in trying to solve the Post problem, the objective from the start had been to keep the Post unit inside the Guild and inside Local 35 (the Washington-Baltimore Guild).

Perlik, however, had convinced him that the Guild could not possibly win the coming NLRB election if it meant the Post unit

would have to stay inside Local 35, with the executive board that had sought to punish them for ignoring a pressmen strike that had begun with serious damage to the Post pressroom.

Perlik went on to say that a poll in the Post unit had convinced him that group would stay in the Guild if they could have a unit separate from Local 35. This procedure required the approval of Local 35's executive board, however, and the board opposed a separate unit.

## Offers to resign

It was not until the night before the convention ended that a solution for the stalemate was found. At that time, moves to create a union separate from Local 35 were dropped after the convention voted for a change in operation of Local 35 and Brian Flores, its administrative officer toward whom the Post unit had been particularly hostile, had offered to resign in a highly emotional address. Flores has headed Local 35 since 1966 but had been denounced as a "tyrant" by some Post guild members after he brought disciplinary charges against them and attempted to levy fines for their continuing to work at the Post during the pressmen's strike.

The operating change voted by the convention follows a plan that a Guild official told E&P has been used in San Francisco, Oakland and Detroit. It calls for a representative assembly elected in the local, one that would outrank the executive board that caused the Post unit's bitterness.

If the Guild wins in the NLRB election, Flores would resign with Dorothy A. Struzinski serving as interim administrative officer until, with the approval of the new representative assembly, a new administrative officer is chosen.

In 1975, the Guild convention had urged that the union move with "prudent speed" toward a merger with the International Typographical Union. This year the convention reaffirmed that policy and stated that a joint Guild-ITU Task Force was instrumental in bringing about settlements which helped save three newspapers from threatened financial failure—The Washington Star, The Cincinnati Post and Times, and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The convention also took action urging that locals be encouraged to coordinate their bargaining, or "better still, seek joint bargaining, with other unions in their shops."

Perlik also urged the Guild's endorsement of a Presidential candidate four years ago, but said he was making no such appeal this year. "All we

want," he said, "is a little bit of input into the thinking that takes place before members cast their votes." And also: "The fact we have a policy of political involvement doesn't mean that we have to apply it unvaryingly, blinding ourselves to the unfavorable consequences that may flow from it under specific circumstances. We have to be sure the value of an endorsement isn't outweighed by the turmoil it may create, or else we will find ourselves helping neither ourselves nor the candidate we are inclined to support."

Another point emphasized by Perlik was the necessity for doing something about "the growing evil" of Southern Production Program, Inc., the Oklahoma City center where newspaper executives and regular employees are trained to handle all phases of newspaper production in case of a strike. As a result, the convention voted to "invite the leaders of other newspaper unions to join in seeking legislative and/or court examination of such scab training arrangements to determine whether or not they conform with existing labor law and policies and whether new legislation is needed to deal with scab schools."

Other actions taken by the convention included:

Approving the levying of special organizing assessments for the months of March and April, 1977, to hire additional international representatives to take advantage of continuing organizing opportunities.

Applauding the Supreme Court for its action on June 30 to overturn the Nebraska gag order but expressing concern "because the court stopped short of declaring unequivocally that the decision of what, where and when to publish is not one to be made by the judiciary."

Supporting further efforts to protect the liberty of the Fresno Four and William T. Farr, who face jail after the Supreme Court failed to review their contempt convictions following on their refusal to reveal news sources.

Demanding that the Central Intelligence Agency halt immediately the use of all journalists, including free lances and stringers, as informants, and deploring the use of press credentials by CIA agents.

Urging the Senate Judiciary Committee to give S-1 the "burial it deserves" and to consider a substitute bill without the oppressive sections woven into the fabric of S-1.

Urging appropriate committees of both the House and Senate to give short shrift to the Official Secrets Act supported by President Ford.

Urging all locals to affiliate with Free-Press committees in their respective states to work toward a "full and complete flow of information to the public."